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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships between masculinity, feminity, and androgyny and measures of sexual behavior, attitudes and knowledge. Sexual attitudes and knowledge were assessed by use of the Sexual Knowledge and Attitudes Test, and sexual behavior was assessed by means of the Sexual Experiences Inventory. Subjects were 189 male and 185 female never-married students from introductory psychology classes. Results are discussed in relation to the correlation between the tests used, and the relationship between each of the sex scales and sexual gender of the student. (YRJ)

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MASCULINITY, FEMININITY, ANDROGYNY AND SEXUALITY

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MASCULINITY, FEMININITY, ANDROGYNY AND SEXUALITY

This study was developed from two different, but related, sources of psychological literature: research concerning gender differences in sexual behavior; and research and theory concerning masculinity-femininity.

As regards gender differences, numerous studies have demonstrated differences between males and females in the area of sexual behavior, attitudes, and standards (e.g. Burgess & Wallin, 1953; Christensen & Carpenter, 1962; Ehrmann, 1959; Eysenck, 1971; Kinsey, Pomeroy & Martin, 1948; Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin & Gebhard, 1953; Mosher & Cross, 1971; Reiss, 1967). While some of the studies may be culturally outdated, there is general consensus that a greater percentage of males engage in premarital sexual intercourse, that males share intercourse with a greater variety of sexual partners, begin active sexual lives at an earlier age, and are less concerned with love as a prerequisite for physical intimacy. In addition, research concerning sexual attitudes and standards indicates that males have more liberal, or permissive, attitudes toward premarital sexual activities, extramarital heterosexual affairs, and masturbation.

As regards masculinity-femininity, the construct has a long and complicated theoretical and mensurational history (Constantinople, 1973), too detailed to chronicle here. At a theoretical level, the construct has usually been conceptualized as a bipolar, unidimensional construct which varies both within each sex as well as between males and females. Gender differences are frequently incorporated into the measurement of the construct by means of empirical test construction procedures that select items which differentiate between the two sexes. Since masculinity in females and femininity in males is often assumed to indicate sexual inversion (i.e., homosexuality), items are also sometimes selected for masculinity-femininity tests which differentiate male homosexuals from "normals" (Dahlstrom & Welsh, 1960).

Empirically, "masculinity" in the United States is usually associated with such attributes as aggression, objectivity, independence, logicality, emotional inhibition and sexual activity while "femininity" is associated with such attributes as passivity, subjectivity, dependency, illogicality, emotionality, and sexual restraint (Kagan, 1964; Kohlberg, 1966; Osofsky & Osofsky, 1972; Rosenkrantz, Vogel, Bee, Broverman, & Broverman, 1968; Yorburg, 1974). Several investigators (e.g., Bem, 1974, 1975; Kagan, 1964; Kohlberg, 1966; Simon & Gagnon, 1969) have suggested that the expression of sexuality might, in part, be determined by the individual's assessment of whether the behavior is congruent with his or her internalized sex-role standards. While masculinity is generally associated with sexual freedom and femininity with sexual restraint, males and females who reject the defining characteristics of their traditional roles might be expected to shift their sexual behavior on the sex-linked freedom-restraint dimension.

More recently, Bem (1974, 1975) has challenged the notion that masculinity and femininity are bipolar ends of a single continuum. She has argued instead that masculinity and femininity may be conceptualized as independent dimensions, that some individuals might be <u>both</u> masculine and feminine (i.e. androgynous), and that individuals who are not rigidly sex-typed might behave in either a "masculine" or "feminine" manner depending upon situational appropriateness. More importantly, she has developed a scale, the Bem Sex Role Inventory, which permits the independent assessment of the two roles and also permits the classification of a person as neither masculine or feminine, but androgynous.

Using the Bem Sex Role Inventory, the purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships between masculinity, femininity and androgyny and measures of sexual behavior, attitudes and knowledge. Sexual attitudes and knowledge were assessed by use of the Sexual Knowledge and Attitudes Test (Lief & Reed, 1972a, 1972b). Sexual behavior (i.e. experience) was assessed by means of the Sexual Experiences Inventory (Brady & Levitt, 1965; Mosher & Cross, 1971).

Method

Subjects:

The participants were 189 male and 185 female never-married students from introductory psychology classes at Washington State University who received credit towards class grades for their participation.

Procedure:

The Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI), the Sex Knowledge and Attitude Test (SKAT), and the Sexual Experiences Inventory (SEI) were administered to the students in groups of approximately 20 with males and females run separately. Half of the male and female groups had a male experimenter, the other half a female experimenter. The students were told both orally and in writing the general nature of the task, that they would be guaranteed complete anonymity, and that participation was completely voluntary.

After completing the BSRI and prior to beginning the SKAT and SEI, the students were informed that the subsequent questionnaires concerned sexual knowledge, attitudes and experiences. They were also reminded that they would be permitted to remain anonymous by placing all their unsigned questionnaire responses into envelopes that had been provided to them, sealing them, and placing them into a large box as they left the room. The SKAT and the SEI were then administered.

Instruments.

Bem Sex Role Inventory: The Bem Sex Role Inventory has been presented in detail elsewhere (Bem, 1974, 1975). The BSRI consists of 60 adjectives and short descriptive phrases (e.g., "compassionate," "aggressive" and "willing to take a stand") which are responded to on a scale ranging from 1 (never or almost never true) to 7 (always or almost always true) in a self-description format. On the BSRI there are 20 Femininity items (e.g., "affectionate," "gentle," "understanding") and 20 Masculinity items (e.g., "ambitious,"

"independent," "analytical") selected on the basis of sex-typed social desirability. There are also 20 items which are either socially desirable (e.g., "friendly," "sincere") or socially undesirable (e.g., "inefficient," "unpredictable") but neutral with regards to sexual gender. Each of these scales, i.e. the Masculinity Scale, the Femininity Scale and the Social Desirability Scale, is scored by obtaining the mean self-rating for each person on all the answered items. The Masculinity and Femininity scores, which are empirically independent, indicate the extent to which a person endorses masculine and feminine personality characteristics as self-descriptive. In addition an Androgyny score is obtained by calculating the student's t ratio for the difference between a person's masculine and feminine self-endorsement. Stated otherwise, a subject's Androgyny score, which is also called the Androgyny t ratio, is the difference between the Femininity and Masculinity scores divided by a term representing the variances of the two sets of ratings. The greater the absolute value of the Androgyny score the more the person is sex-typed or sex reversed with high positive scores indicating femininity and high negative scores indicating masculinity. In contrast, the closer the Androgyny score is to zero, the more the person is androgynous indicating a sex role balanced between masculine and feminine characteristics.

Sex Knowledge and Attitude Test: Lief and Reed (1972a, 1972b) constructed the Sex Knowledge and Attitude Test (SKAT) to obtain information about sexual attitudes, knowledge and experience. The first two areas, attitudes and knowledge, were of interest in the present study.

The attitude portion of the SKAT consists of 35 items which are rated on a 5-point scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." On the basis of factor analysis, the attitude items have been divided into four subscales: Heterosexual Relations (HR), Sexual Myths (SM), Autoeroticism (M),

and Abortion (A). The Heterosexual Relations scale measures attitudes towards premarital and extramarital relations, with high scores indicating a liberal attitude and low scores a conservative attitude. The Sexual Myths scale is concerned with commonly held sexual misconceptions, with high scores indicating rejection of these misconceptions and low scores indicating acceptance. The Autoeroticism scale deals with attitudes toward the permissibility of masturbatory activities and high scores indicate a greater belief that masturbation is a healthy practice which should not be prohibited. The Abortion scale measures feelings about social, medical, and legal aspects of abortion with high scores indicating that abortion is acceptable and low scores indicating that it is unacceptable and in need of strict medical supervision.

The Sexual Knowledge portion of the SKAT is a 71 item true-false inventory which deals with knowledge of the physiological, psychological and social aspects of sexual behavior. Fifty items, used in this study, were included in the test on the basis of their psychometric properties and 21 items, excluded from this study, were included in the test to stimulate classroom teaching. Each of the 50 psychometrically based items were required to have item difficulties ranging from .25 to .75 and point biserial correlations of .30 or greater with the total test score. The score on the Sexual Knowledge scale is the number of items correct and high scores thus represent accurate knowledge concerning sexual matters.

Sexual Experience Inventory: The Mosher and Cross (1971) Sexual Experience Inventory is based on the list of sexual experiences found by Brady and Levitt (1965) to form a Guttman-type scale. The sexual experiences are (a) kissing, (b) kissing with tongue contact, (c) manual manipulation of clad female breast by a male, (d) manual manipulation of unclad female breast by a male, (e) manual manipulation of female genitalia by a male, (f) oral contact with female breast by a male, (g) manual manipulation of male genitalia by a female,

(h) heterosexual intercourse: ventral-ventral, (i) oral contact with male genitalia by a female, (j) oral contact with female genitalia by a male, (k) heterosexual intercourse: ventral-dorsal, and (l) homosexual relations. For each of these 12 sexual experiences, the inventory contains questions concerning participation (i.e. occurrence), feelings, reasons for nonparticipation and sexual standards. The present study used only the questions concerned with participation and standards, omitting the portions concerned with feelings and reasons for nonparticipation. The questions on participation are concerned with whether each of the 12 experiences occurred with (a) a loved person during the last year, (b) a loved person during the past, (c) an unloved person during the last year, and (d) an unloved person during the past. For each of these four participation scales, 1 point is given for each experience in which the student has participated. In addition, a cumulative sexual experience score is determined by giving 1 point for each of the sexual experiences in which the student has participated. The sexual standards questions are concerned with whether each of the 12 sexual experiences is considered (a) acceptable premarital behavior for males, (b) acceptable premarital behavior for females, (c) acceptable marital behavior for males, and (d) acceptable marital behavior for females. For each of these four sexual standards scales, 1 point is given for each of the 12 sexual experiences considered acceptable behavior.

Results and Discussion

Pearson correlation coefficients were used to determine the relationship between each of the subscales of the Sex Knowledge and Attitude Test (SKAT) and the Sexual Experiences Inventory (SEI) with the Femininity scores, the Masculinity scores, and the Androgyny *t* scores calculated from the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI). Correlations between the three subscales of the BSRI and the various subscales of the SKAT and SEI were calculated separately for males and females. In addition, the relationship between each of the sex scales and

the sexual gender of the student was determined by using the point biserial correlation with females = 1, and males = 2.

Table 1 presents the correlations of each of the subscales of the SKAT with the sexual gender of the students and with the Femininity, Masculinity and Androgyny scores calculated from the BSRI for males and females. In Table 1 and all subsequent tables the Ns upon which the coefficients were calculated

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Insert Table 1 about here

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are not equivalent in all instances since some subjects did not complete all subscales. The Ns for the male and female coefficients ranged from 171 to 188 while the Ns for the total sample (i.e. sex-gender rs) ranged from 335 to 371.

In Table 1 it can be seen that 16 of 35 coefficients reached statistical significance at the .05 level, indicating considerable relationships between sexual attitude measures and scores from the Bem Sex Role Inventory. Closer examination of Table 1 shows that only one of the sex-gender coefficients reached significance (-.30 Sexual Myths) indicating that males hold more misconceptions about sex than females. For male subjects the most noteworthy coefficients are also those involving the Sexual Myths subscale of the SKAT. Here high scores on the Masculinity Scale of the BSRI were associated with the acceptance of common sexual myths and males who obtained high androgyny t scores (indicating femininity) rejected common sexual myths. For female subjects, 11 of 15 coefficients were significant at the .05 level and none of the significant coefficients involved the Sexual Knowledge subscale of the SKAT. In general, the significant correlations show that females who endorse masculine characteristics on the BSRI hold more liberal attitudes towards heterosexual relations, abortion and autoeroticism than females who endorse only feminine characteristics on the BSRI. Females who score high on the Femininity subscale and those who obtain

high positive androgyny t scores hold conservative attitudes towards sexuality, abortion, and autoeroticism. Females who characterize themselves in stereotyped "feminine" ways also show greater acceptance of common sexual myths.

Table 2 gives the intercorrelations between the subscales of the Bem Sex Role Inventory and the five scores calculated from the Sexual Experience Inventory.

Insert Table 2 about here

As in Table 1, it can be seen that a substantial number of coefficients were significant at the .05 level. In regards to the sex-gender coefficients, only two were significant and both involved sexual intimacy with "unloved" partners. Males report participating in greater degrees of sexual intimacy with "unloved" partners than females. In regards to "loved" partners there is apparently no difference between the sexual intimacies of males and females. With respect to male students, those who score high on the Masculinity scale of the BSRI indicate greater degrees of sexual intimacy with "unloved" partners, and those who obtain higher androgyny t scores (i.e. in the direction of femininity) indicate lesser degrees of sexual intimacy with "unloved" partners. In regards to sexual behavior with "loved" partners, both masculinity scores and femininity scores from the BSRI are positively correlated with sexual intimacy for males. For females, the masculinity, femininity, and androgyny scores from the BSRI are unrelated to the degrees of sexual intimacy in which they report engaging with "loved" partners. The same scores, however, are significantly related to the sexual intimacies in which they engage with "unloved" partners. With "unloved" partners, females who score high on the Masculinity scale and those who obtain negative androgyny t scores report greater degrees of sexual intimacy; those who score high on the Femininity Scale and those with positive (i.e. feminine) androgyny t scores report restricted sexual intimacies.

Table 3 presents the intercorrelations between the BSRI scores and the sexual standards scores from the Sex Experience Inventory. In contrast to

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Insert Table 3 about here

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earlier tables, Table 3 shows only 6 significant (.05 level) correlations and none that were significant at the .01 level. The most noteworthy set of correlations occurred with female students where those with high masculinity scores and those with negative androgyny t scores were more tolerant and accepting of high degrees of sexual intimacy for both premarital males and premarital females.

TABLE 1

Intercorrelations Between the BSRI Subscales and the SKAT Subscales

Subscales of BSRI	Subscales of the SKAT				
	Heterosexual Relations	Abortion	Autoeroticism	Sexual Myths	Sexual Knowledge
Males					
Masculinity score	.10	.03	-.02	-.23**	-.10
Femininity score	-.07	-.09	.12*	.04	.01
Androgyny *t* score	-.14*	-.09	.09	.21**	.08
Females					
Masculinity score	.29**	.14*	.17*	.03	.04
Femininity score	-.20**	-.25**	-.25**	-.18*	.01
Androgyny *t* score	-.32**	-.23*	-.26**	-.14*	-.03
Sex-Gender[a]	.03	.04	-.04	-.30**	.03

[a]These are point biserial correlations with female = 1 and male = 2

*$p < .05$

**$p < .01$

TABLE 2

Intercorrelations Between the BSRI Subscales and the Sexual Participation Scores of the SEI

Subscales of BSRI	Subscales of the SEI				
	Loved last year	Loved past	Unloved last year	Unloved past	Cumulative Experience
Males					
Masculinity score	.23**	.25**	.19**	.21**	.27**
Femininity score	.20**	.16*	-.02	-.01	.18*
Androgyny t score	-.06	-.10	-.16*	-.16*	-.10
Females					
Masculinity score	.11	.13	.21**	.18*	.14*
Femininity score	.09	.08	-.15*	-.18*	.02
Androgyny t score	-.03	-.05	-.27**	-.24**	-.09
Sex-Gender	-.07	-.01	.23**	.19**	.01

*$p < .05$

**$p < .01$

TABLE 3

Intercorrelations Between the BSRI Subscales and the Sexual Standards Scores from the SEI

Subscales of BSRI	Subscales of the SEI			
	Premarital: Males	Premarital: Females	Postmarital: Males	Postmarital: Females
Males				
Masculinity score	.08	.07	.04	.03
Femininity score	.13	.13*	.14*	.12
Androgyny *t* score	.01	.01	.02	.01
Females				
Masculinity score	.16*	.15*	-.01	.00
Femininity score	-.10	-.11	-.10	-.10
Androgyny *t* score	-.18*	-.18*	-.05	-.06
Sex-Gender	.02	.01	-.03	-.04

*$p < .05$

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